

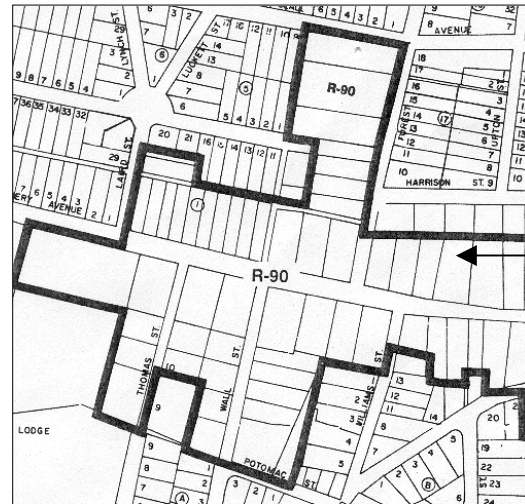
**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT**

**September 10, 2003  
MEETING NO. 10-03**

**APPLICATION:** HDC03-0257

**DATE FILED:** August 21, 2003

**APPLICANT/  
OWNER:** Daniel Maddox  
217 W. Montgomery Ave.  
Rockville, MD 20850



Subject

**PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:**

The 2 ½ -story house faces west on West Montgomery Avenue and is part of a block of late 19<sup>th</sup> century houses with consistent deep setbacks. Many large deciduous trees shade the house. A graveled driveway to a rear garage (planned to be replaced with a larger garage) is at the northwestern corner. A small 2-story rear building once served as a summer kitchen.

**PREVIOUS ACTIONS AT THIS ADDRESS:**

HDC03-0249	Request to build 898 square foot garage and demolish old garage; approved with conditions, June 19, 2003
HDC03-0238	Request to remove three trees and replace a fence; approved except for one tree removal, April 17, 2003
HD02-0226	Request to re-side annex with Hardiplank; approved to reside with wood, January 29, 2003

**REQUEST:** The Applicant requests a Certificate of Approval to remove a 53-inch DBH (diameter at breast height) white oak, located in the driveway.

The Applicant submitted a hazard evaluation from Arbor Care, Inc., tree specialists, dated July 25, 2003. Arbor Care performed and measured four core samples on the tree to determine the extent of possible interior decay. The amount of decayed tissue can be determined by applying these measurements in a strength loss percentage formula. According to Arbor Care, potentially hazardous trees fall into the range of 33% or higher, while tissue loss less than 33% is considered sufficient to support most trees, as long as they are periodically monitored for changing conditions. The subject tree's strength loss percentage was calculated at 29%.

However, Arbor Care concluded that the tree is hazardous and recommends removal of the tree, based on the following:

1. The tree has a “noticeable lean” toward “high profile targets”, specifically the neighbor’s house and the neighbor’s mature white oak;
2. The tree’s canopy is off balance with overweight limbs; and
3. There is decay along the back side of the tree which may be evidence of an old lightening strike.

White Oak proposed  
for removal



Evidence of lightning strike  
and decay

The City Forester also inspected the tree and found that it looks healthy and does not appear to present an immediate hazard. However, she agreed that it does lean toward the neighbor's house and there is some decay on the opposite side of the lean direction. She noted that a tree with a strength loss percentage of less than 33% should be fairly stable, but severe storms and high wind speeds have taken out healthier trees. She recommends replacement with three 2 ½-inch caliper oak trees.

1. *Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.*

This property served as a summer boarding house in the period 1888 to 1898. Many of the summer boarders later returned to Rockville to build their own houses. After 1898, it was the home of Professor W. Pinckney Mason, principal of the Rockville Academy, who housed boarding students there. Pickney Mason was a descendent of both George Mason of Gunston Hall, Virginia and William Pinckney, U.S. Attorney General under President Madison.

2. *The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.*

N/A

3. *The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.*

N/A

4. *To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.*

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** This is a significant tree. It is set far back from West Montgomery Avenue, but is visible and notable from the right-of-way. It is located on the left side of the driveway and will be an obstacle when the newly approved garage is built.

Staff recommends that the HDC approve removal of the white oak due to its potentially hazardous condition as assessed by the tree care specialist and replacement with three 2 ½-inch caliper oak trees, per the City Forester's recommendation. Pruning major limbs of the tree's canopy, periodically monitoring the tree's condition, and realignment of the driveway to accommodate the tree are other options the Applicant might consider.